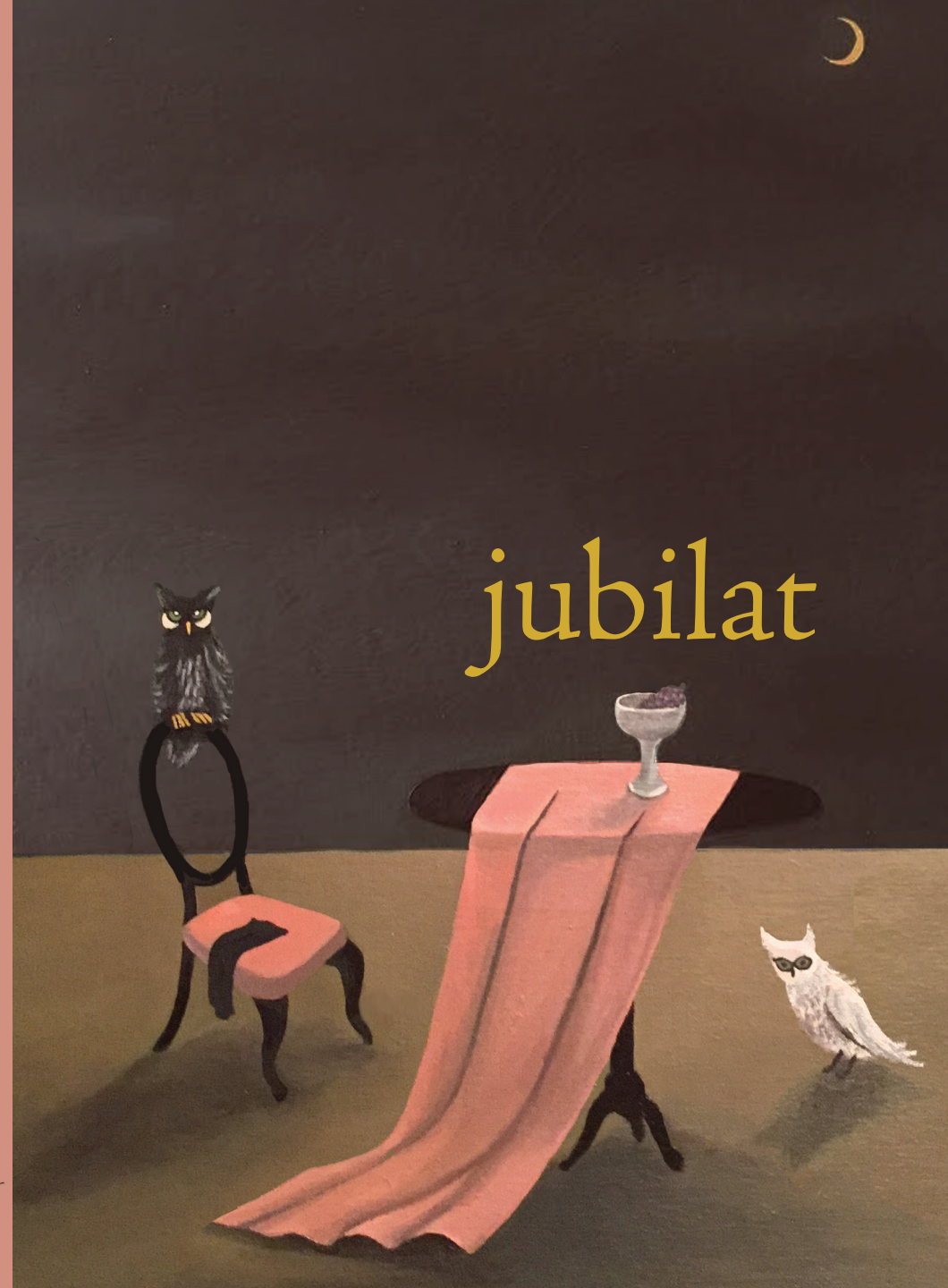


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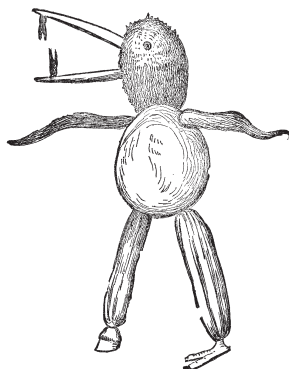


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[IF ANYONE KNEW WHAT LETTER LIFE BEGINS WITH, IMMENSE]

Román Antopolsky

if anyone knew what letter life begins with, immense
sheets would follow with just such character on with no
end—like numbers over opalka, which pursue further than
him or maybe not. who knows. sporadically sounds are minced
to extract one or a few anew but regularly all is old when
thought of it first, until perpetual. then changes occur to
what's old. but notice not to what was. what was? rather is—
so it to have been. both the same aim as differently as
it sounds. and both, passed by, are and not there.
was it the sun rising up before rising what made encountering
him this time an event unseen, the headless body of his—
roaming near minute distant stars? compelled to keep,
say, aloof from it since otherwise his light'll
prevent him from seeing and knowing it never to be
retrieved he left it astray and followed his cycle.
not unknown among humans and immortals such
an unepic quest this case was seen and held onto
by many. yet out of the thickness of the shape of
this transit i manage to see in awe a groundhog
nearby the star, to whom he talks. i overhear only the end:
“get a notebook and firewood, that's what your goal is.”
to my dismay the rodent knows no english and only
of the last two words makes something of: *gólas*, which
translates as *voice*: it sings, on the spot. the sun
brightens up and adds: “son, soon comes” and
i miss the rest; the light becomes too bright; other

things come to be closer now.
and the sky is in joy. shapes are received. time is
taken at face value. every
animal's a good sport. holding all on
to knowing the body that roams never
was and has been.

[EVERY TIME I STEP OUTSIDE, OUT OF MY HOME-SIDE]

every time i step outside, out of my home-side
into, say, the yard, i see the night,
and then the sky. if it only were the other
way around, but it seems not possible.
it's not a color. you need stars first in
order to see the eve of the day to come
but you'll see night first.
same at daylight.
days will have begun before sun.
nothing dies, or even lives, without a hint
of forthcoming.
say night's gloves,
say shadows' mittens.
a hand, veiled, reaches
to you, the nakedness, dressed,
drains what's not there yet into
you. it's you.
but what does forthcome into *you*, or
does come to?
say a day at bay?

[EVERY LOVELY BREAK IN US]

Quenton Baker

every lovely break in us is a treatise
on the perfect fragile design of being
kept. the sail, tobacco leaf, night language of
waves, tongues as parcel.

bless the island/bless the dim hum of un-slave/
bless each blade we buried in a deserving
belly. we are cargo-born ballast drained with
asking

and then what?

[THE OCEAN BANGS ON CLOSED CLIFF DOORS]

the ocean bangs on closed cliff doors,
unsurprising finish.

adequately fought beneath black trellis,
the rigging gave no guarantee.

you. you knew the rope
the blood how to make it stain.
how not.

who are you? who are you?

i know.
i've known.
i've told.

do you know?
can you tell which shape is shadow?

which is spear?

can we conclude?
is there a click? a flash of the blade

a brisk hug

of handspike at the end?

or is that stain
always the runny middle?

the foolish and invigorated infinite?

will you at least

kill me right?
kiss me shut

in a finished way?

BLACK MALE MAYBE 20

in public
on camera

in the park

in one two
one two
onetwo

in onetwo

i have been done up.

accessorized to a certain taste.
given my uniform.

i heard the tailor

shout

what i needed:

or maybe
or was it

bully in the pulpit!
body in the belfry!

banished by the bellhop!

nah.

it was:
i got all your birthdays!

and he did.

he shoved the

ocean sounds.

and now
i am
black

candles in my belly

turned on

laid me down
and poured the world
on me.

fully dressed.

BRAINBOX PORTRAITS

Carrie Bennett

5

In the first stage the sky explodes into an enormous purple web, forests of coral bloom from the ground. In the second stage all the rivers flood and birds grow horns. Thick sheets of algae cover buildings, power lines echo cooing sounds. In the third stage humans forget how to walk.

6

The brainbox begins to burrow deeper into the skin like a snail or nail. Now the body fills with sand and a single stone settles between the brain's two hemispheres. Giant windmills grow in forests, all the trees are ghosts now. The sky is a single star, an infinite dream of forgetting like an empty field.

7

In the fourth stage the brainbox becomes a sun. Humans turn into a tribe of deer and there is only one language. At night the deer shine from the fireflies that live inside their bones. Each day ends with the trees losing their leaves and each day begins with the leaves growing back.

8

In the final stage there are no maps to memorize, no yesterday, no little hello, no lake or shore or hand to hold. There are no trees, no branches, no leaves shining sunlight, no returning to, no well, no wild, no wonderful hiding place. There is no windmill or wind or word worry.

EAT SHIT AND DIE

Emily Bludworth de Barrios

I

Frequently I may not be
understanding that which I
can see happening around me I
know the gist and outlines of people's emotional states

You can perceive the gist and
outline of economic systems trembling and immovable
under the shuddering inertia I watch

the small businesses from the freeway
I imagine inside them some mothers or fathers sweeping the
marbled old perpetually grimy linoleum tiles
Everybody is excellent at
something Also covered in

the fumes of bleach and Aquanet and mall perfume or cologne
which your kid bought you and about which you were
over the moon

Many of the systems which govern
you

are invisible ponds of powers and accumulation
Not simply desire but also desire Even the most humble or entitled
person is
governed by desire They carry yachts or sailing ships of
ego and societal forces perched above their person It's natural and
right that everybody should want to feel big and important

in the eyes of their peers and
strangers I mean important in the eyes of their families

Another thing people may want or lack is a little occupation
Not everybody has a feeling about what to do with their

intellect or their hands I've heard that feeling useful or being useful is
a way to
not feel so
extremely gaping or
rudderless as
these kids in the suburbs sometimes feel

Ponds of empty desire lure them to some
other shores, back and forth Have they covered any territory
No they have not covered any territory And they still have so much to
do

If I commit to being a better or different kind of person
the likelihood is that I will not be a better type of person It

hasn't yet been proven to me that within myself I have been able to
accomplish radical change that
shakes me into action or a

new understanding I sometimes wish trite sayings were actionable or
true I'd
open my heart and be open-minded and
treat others as I would have them treat me At the park Kordes roses
grow on thorny

branches in clusters of well-maintained flower beds The flower heads
are
extremely fragrant Very decadent They are
elegant and full of bees
Nothing is so flawless

as the

park which is a public miracle As the
roses which are a public miracle An
old form of
decadent effort The families of the city
use the park in weather fine and foul The Hotel Occupancy Tax pays
the men who
cut the stems off
the old dry roses Who clean the restrooms and fill the path
In the center of the park are small groups of men who

visit the park with other men (business men) to play some golf
Especially on fine days

and weekdays and afternoons and weekends Around the golf course
new mothers push strollers And friends from work
get exercise on the exercise path It is a miracle and it is glorious to have
the
energy and time and place to exercise and then to
rest

Perhaps almost
 everyone will be at the park to celebrate the 4th
 of July
 People on blankets with wristbands that
 light up and a can of mosquito repellent
 exhaling a sweet specific odor recalling older nights with

lights and burst firecrackers like lighted lines of thin bright fingers
 in the sky Every holiday is some renewed variation or
 version of that holiday Lined up like identical cards in a pack Only
 everybody gets older And on the 4th less

invested in the patriotic ballads
 Not wanting to be proudly standing up

Though the hot dogs pickles cold sliced onions
 hamburgers beer smoke ascending from the grizzled blacked smoker
 are
 exactly what encapsulate a humble joy in the middle of

summer You see your mother who you love Your father who you
 love Your husband and child swing together
 under the branches It's a sweet and
 bitter mix (of memory and anticipation) The bowl of chips and Coke
 with ice
 under the umbrella It's like an endless good experience
 rendered temporary and eternal
 by the day of holiday which
 stays and leaves each year

Everyone at the mall is
at the place
they want to be It's

so silver and
hung with light and marble
in the atrium vaulting between
the stores which

are the real features of course
Not that the stores
definitely or ever actually ever have satisfied a particular need or sated a

desire
I've always had a big faith in them though I think
everyone does

Five department stores
 under God
 circle the inner core of the mall Thy
 kingdom is maintained

by servants (servers and/or service departments
 and/or customer service) who live over
 yonder in the clustered beige apartments with
 bricks of beige and beige carpets a small living
 room sofa television communal shared swimming pool thin sliver
 of a balcony where one smokes
 overlooking rows of parking for each servant or server's car A
 key location in a home is the bedroom closet Too

many pants blouses dresses fit stuffed on
 a thick white plastic or thin metal hanger Expectations hanging
 limply How a relief is the mall where the clothing
 looks delicate and free (loosely spacious)

French vanilla and caramel flavored coffee powder in a
 red metal rectangular can is
 exactly what coffee meant to me before they built two Starbucks in
 Friendswood Before
 everyone learned what venti and grande meant
 What a nervous heavy feeling possessed me when I ordered
 as if stumbling into a dark room filled with dim knowledge
 You may find yourself living in a community filling up with brands and
 corporations and
 still you

will make
 it so your life has meaning I mean no matter what your life will have
 texture The textures of blankets and frustration and grass at the
 park Air conditioning on
 hot days when the metal of a seat belt buckle glints

crisp and searing like in Granddaddy's pickup
 Old people or grown people are the ones who were
 luminous with knowledge that seemed to me so dimmed and
 dark Dark because it was
 unavailable to me Like a dimmed landscape of textures dripping Ever
 moving beyond my reach
 Now I think the
 society is evolving so rapidly (Changing like crystals

arching in a thousand directions)
 Really complex and continually different I have a pleasant
 empty feeling when I'm

on the Internet looking
up these high-
resolution images of still-life paintings from 1613 Floris van Dijck's
peeled lemon

rind uncoils
off the edge of a table Cheese halves and grapes are stacked or piled in
the
middle of a thick wooden table
Arranged together in a thick pile A dish of olives or
nuts (shining in a

tray) have been placed on an
embroidered tablecloth (red or white) The halved cheese wheel is
marked with the knife A loose napkin falls from the bread A
peeled apple sits on a plate As if some friends were
loosely talking around a table on a late morning or in a late night
eating apricots and hazelnuts
Strawberries olives and dark gold bread

More air conditioning than anyone could
ever want Remembering coming into the house soaking wet from the
swimming pool A
minty coldness of air conditioned air An
elegant feeling Wrapped in a towel In somebody's parents' brand-
new house (made of bricks)
Treated gently and casually as if it were a hotel
or a weekend home It was always a very clean home Tile floors Large
leather sofas

Marble countertops The newest technology
Oil paintings or designer paint colors A
refrigerator well-stocked with good food and
I was there to enjoy it

Roman mansions coliseums brothels and street vendors replaced or
 evolved from those of the
 Etruscans who left behind some grave
 mounds or pottery Some
 Etruscan statues and remnants of
 masks The Romans
 borrowed from the
 Etruscans and the Greeks whose iconography was
 reborn in Roman form

The Roman mansions were
 opulent and
 ornate or so

they seemed to me in slides I've seen The gardens were marked with
 junipers on a
 hillside The junipers grow like
 a dark green flame or finger
 that reaches into the cloud

You exit the mansion and enter the garden
 On your left and right, lining the long reflecting pool, are carven
 statuary Lined
 up on the edge of the swimming pool or bath which is

made of paved stone
 Ultimately the
 stones against all odds were actually preserved more or less where
 they were placed So an idea of ancient opulent afternoons was
 preserved The winter

domicile of a wealthy senator or diplomat
It was a place to feel like
exquisite carved painted stone

Roman is how I would describe the feeling of
 exceptionality that
 marks or distinguishes some of the shoppers I knew growing up We
 were already
 expert at distinguishing brand from brand To know what
 makes a compelling
 brand is to detect an
 elder idea
 roaming around inside it

The branding sometimes pretends to be an
 Old World sensibility
 of drama or belonging

that instills one with a feeling of
 having perhaps a quiet understated importance I knew someone in
 high school who had
 a Ford Explorer (Eddie Bauer Edition)
 There was something wholesome and Cape Cod about it that

you could palpably feel It was an aura
 or an emotion Not even a story but like a false implanted memory
 Unless I resist my intuitive impulses I'll always be shopping Wrapped
 in a sort of

musky weather of
 useless matter that
 sits around
 the bedroom and piles up in the

dining room So
if my impulse is to buy it I know that I should
especially not buy it

Ripping into the air The cars on the freeway
 enact a
 metaphor of
 excess The cars are filled with
 men or women or kids who may be eating a McDonald's
 breakfast warm from a dry paper sack The car is a limited
 environment Almost like a
 rolling cabin or shuttle

that tears through at an
 opulent speed
 Opulent is not how I would describe

the interiors of the cars which may feel crammed Strapped
 heavily into a seat
 Actually it is a very
 tight space Like a cockpit really

Your chewing gum your sunglasses your child's toys The window
 through which you
 order some medicine or coffee or food
 Unless it is an old vehicle with a faulty window

Many vehicles are old and faulty Some lives
 (upper crust lives) feel confident and
 straightforward
 Their cars are freshly cleaned and glimmering (without

dents or crumpled bags of breakfast)
 It is a mostly
 empty car with a feeling of holiness or rain

236,000

Arda Collins

We know

the mountain, the valley,

the river, and the sea,

and ask for mercy.

If something must be

it's this. One

death never recounted

enough;

tractable dispossession

makes a future

from light instead of time;

crying to try

understanding; waking full

of mornings from the past and future,

turned to the window to see from bed
the life.

An ocean scaled
for a car key
lost as the tide falls out
over shells, snails, rocks, and shiny slime,
out to a sandbar dropped from another horizon.

Everything is made out of light.

Didn't we talk about this already?

A scrawl on an afternoon
when a bee
moves around it
and a rainbow prisms out of light
exposing a piece

of this,
what surrounds
yes
the world rubbed off
The day's work is done
towering anguish in the letter E
A tear in half frees all civilization. The ruins,
caves, and oceans
held here so short,
bigger and bigger
I think this crap is finally over
Leaves, dust, turn and glow.

I5I

I woke up so hungry
coming empty from learning; how this world stays made,
and the pines black in the windows;
life or more
it was new here,
it was night;
it's possible
to be others,
or always to have been and not recall the way
but here, now, you could say
it's night
I love you
winter is eternity
no one could ever know.

It isn't or it was;

love is to be thousands.

Lean or dream

into the wet evening bark

and heavy, still snow

like a look in the eyes

that appears here and again

in places, out in days.

A river changes over,

a universe changes over

unlike a river

and nothing like love

a river really is like love

if love

the snow in the evening is like an eclipse

snow and moon

across night

and the white

hours of the afternoon.

*

They embrace in silence by the tree

Out of the embrace he steps towards the cabin as she turns and smiles
to smell the blossoms

They walked up the bank of the island

She turns to take a breath and embraces him

*

The sound of the morning, the sun had reconfigured the prismatic
elements

to cast forms real and afresh,
the other side of a song—
this is the song
where there is sun, sun and new days!
Water fills the water away!
Water comes into the sun like drums
wide open the world
Your eyes are covered
and closed; the world is soft and irreducible.

*

Sunset in an animal
overtaken by a current in the air
cast up as if by horses
out of silence

In its entirety
heat of an iris
everywhere inside,
voice to blood.

*

Gird yourself and dream, and don't come in.
A door, hall, path, and back
over the bed, under the roof
mist unravels the forest
tomorrow, snow crashes off of the future

Not a complete field of vision

in the fight of their lives.

It's disorienting to be

hundreds of years in love,

find one another at all:

An oak tree opens

and a planet implodes.

It's translated from a Proterozoic vision

composed in a mind of unknown lineage;

oak tree of our world

appears more easily

than the original *cfrvivhe*,

which can be likened

to *oak tree*.

Stones shine in time
and compress in reverse;
tonight, tomorrow, we'll
batter out a moon,
fulminate in a shadow.

22 I

The drapes on the congress of light scales out the city

No magic broken or taken away

it isn't any longer

we're just longer

hop to the bed to fort the happiness

bested bleak lake snow departed for happiness

Of course I love you!

over the allee and lawn

to cement pillars for horizon rain

Versaille is everywhere

Beati, rex tremendae

majestatis

Gigantic flowers come to morning gratis

in paradise

climb the lattis and slept

little yellow window interred

after the boosters went off on fire

in the basement and in syphilis

limestone pity

lest you get a handle on it

bone shatters in atomic silence over hundreds of years

you got here out in the garage

amble in the way

TENDENCY

Cassie Donish

One could live, therefore

As if following a sparrow down a
road of light

Sturdy bluebells

She paused the recording
of the grass

Grew hungry enough
to eat what was offered

Or would she still be holding the pear

And read all his books backwards

As if there is no
direction

In which one should live



"STARED OFF IN SUCH AN INTERESTED AND SPIRITED ATTITUDE"

CHAPTER XVII

ADVENTURES WITH GREAT HORNED OWLS

*O, when the night falls, and roosts the fowl,
Then, then is the reign of the horned owl.*

CORNWALL.

I AM free to confess that no other bird gives me the same thrill of ecstasy as the Great Horned Owl in its native forests. Savage and destructive though it is, there is a majesty in the appearance and character of the splendid creature which compels admiration. Owing to its intractable wildness and secluded haunts, there is no bird more difficult to observe and know. Hardy above all our birds, it makes or selects a great nest in the most inaccessible woodland



VIEW OF THE GREAT HORNED OWL ON HER NEST



GREAT HORNED OWL.
(*Bubo virginianus*).
¾ Life-size.

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373. Screech Owl (*Megascops asio*). L. 9.4; W. 6.4; T. 3. Two color phases; with ear-tufts; eyes yellow. *Ad.* Gray phase. Above buffy gray irregularly marked with black; below gray, white, rusty and black. *Ad.* Red phase. Above bright rusty brown with a few black streaks; below white streaked with black and barred with rusty brown. *Yng.* Above gray or rusty barred with black and white; below white thickly barred with blackish. *Notes.* A frequently repeated tremulous, wailing whistle; often followed by a slower refrain-like call; a castanet-like snapping of the mandibles.

Range. Eastern North America from Florida north to New Brunswick, Ontario and Minnesota, west to the Great Plains; resident.

373a. Florida Screech Owl (*M. a. floridanus*). Smaller than No. 373, W. 6.9; T. 2.8. Two color phases. Similar to those of No. 373, but averaging darker and more heavily marked below; especially in red phase.

Range. Florida, north along coast to South Carolina; west along coast to Louisiana.

373b. Texas Screech Owl (*M. a. mecalli*). Similar to No. 373, but smaller, W. 6.1; underparts, especially sides of belly, with more black bars; toes barer. I have seen only a gray phase.

Range. "From western and southern Texas across east border of tablelands of Mexico." (Bailey.)

373c. California Screech Owl (*M. a. bendirei*). W. 6.6. A gray color phase only. Resembling No. 373, but somewhat darker above; less buff about the nape; black streakings more regularly distributed; underparts much as in No. 373b.

Range.—California and southern Oregon.

373d. Kennicott Screech Owl (*M. a. kennicottii*). L. 10; W. 7. 25. *Ads.* Sooty brown prevailing above; blackish markings below nearly if not fully as wide as white ones; darkest of our Screech Owls.

Range.—Pacific coast from Oregon to Sitka.

373e. Rocky Mountain Screech Owl (*M. a. maxwelliae*). W. 7. Similar to No. 373f above but paler; pale grayish buff predominating; black markings throughout much narrower and less numerous than in No. 373g; palest of our Screech Owls.

Range.—"Foothills and adjacent plains of the east Rocky Mountains from Colorado north to Montana" (Bendire).



373.



373 c.



373 d.

WAY WAY OUT

David Feinstein

How ridiculous it must look
trying to tune my head
like this, wood vibrating
in my desk for years.

Sometimes I think
you were right about infinity:
that it's just an idea
invented by men
too lazy to keep counting.

Sometimes I still won't
go to the bathroom.
I wait until it stings real bad
sitting by the window
watching a squirrel
nervously shoot up
and across the branches.

I try to calculate
what light must weigh

way way out there
where it's all light
and no games,
where I shake at one thing
until it becomes everything else.

KADDISH

Strapped into black
there is only one theme song
on earth tonight.
Giant death machine,
play it for me.
Of all the silent killers
none is weaker than my smile
after a tasteless joke,
something I would never have said
in your company. According to my people
there is no heaven or hell
only earth and memory,
the normal hunger
that hits this time of night
trying to picture you
walking back to us
across the strip mall parking lot of this century.
My brother and I, still buckled in,

slurping grape soda
as the same war crawls across the radio.
There are bodies and to see them
is to know they are yours
to forget, to know there's nothing
that won't be forgotten.
On the dark windshield
I use my finger to write your name,
I watch the world move through it.

ALTERNATE ZOO

Alan Felsenthal

A lawn is lit by souls asleep
in tandem or alone, or hiding in a hive
averse to soil, a crypt. Above
stands a crane who does not dance
around. His graceful leg is a sundial.

*But what's the stone a crane holds while he bends
one leg?* They say a stone keeps the crane
bent from ever dozing off. If it drops, it hits the bottom
of his other leg. But the crane really carries a
bee, which never stings the silent

crane, because it doesn't judge him for holding it close
so long. The crane, unlike us,
cannot dream of bees and, therefore, does not die—he caresses
the bee, whose spirit would rather wander, like ours, out of the still
cradle of the crane's

dark palm. These small actions of thought are daily
in the cemetery when one is not noticing
doves, who sing the song of a stone doorway.
A whole genre of song, once in books, for the good
death, which used to happen at home.

Everyone then knew how to die, even
if illiterate, and family
excursions to the cemetery were popular, like emblazoned
symbols. The parents woke their children
early to walk to the gates where the regarful

faces of Janus either let you in or forgot
to keep you out. His
four eyes weighed the soul like a scale and human hands held felt
flowers that could bob and dance,
float among the visitors like a parade of lanterns

greeting the stones that represent the greatness
of matter. The hardened
ground hardened itself, so graves
could not be dug very deep. Pebbles
go on top. The rock mounds

happened as grave markers by accident, should you happen
to believe in accidents. If a nomad
had to pass the gravesite of another tribe, he
might repair a plot by adding stones.
How did he know whose

it was wasn't a question he asked. If
it's too arid to cry, you can leave objects
instead—flowers (real), immortelles
(ceramic), toys, ten cents, and fallen
insects (especially the canty and

joyful water witch, a national emblem of the Japanese
island of Honshu, which some believe can
join the eyelids for the journey
ahead). But I shouldn't
just tell you of good things that help us sleep when the things

keeping us awake are as ageless. The King
of Terrors chimes the rusted
keys of Time and swings them as a scythe to harvest the souls of knights
and pharaohs alike, waiting outside a church,
kiosk of Trajan, east of the Nile in Egypt

leaning against lily-topped
columns that echo unfolding
life while two cobras answer with death, above papyrus leaves
for knowledge and rebirth. A
little more confusing when vulture wings symbolize

maternal care. Not as baffling as the pelican though, who might
be feeding her babies from a pouch
many believe to be her flesh, a common mistake,
as though babies eat blood for anyone but the dreaming
martyr. Craftsmen built the birds of prey and it's impossible

not to suffer as a symbol. Next
is the woodpecker, an able storm-predictor, who would
not help God make trenches for rivers and lakes. Now
he is a headbanger, though Romulus and Remus
needed his food delivery services

often when making Rome. There's the owl
who hates light and never cries when crying
offers the only neutralizer of poison. Once
upon a time before our eyes were rocks, before the columns broke
off and fell into the center of the earth, the whole family

produced tears together, not as a trick or decorative device but to pacify
the soul leaving the house, to tell them that water yields
plants and the daffodil finds light in paradise
as often as in the underworld, where no pagan soul's
poor, wrapped in clovers. One

question the youngest has quite
often: are they coming back?
Queen of Heaven never returns them. There are more questions
about her crown, its magical
qualities, and whether she

really kisses each soul goodnight. Nothing at night is reliable.
The spotted sky is an aviary for our imaginations of
real ones. The pathway to the sun is filled with burning eagles, redeemed
by plunging back into the waters of the tiny
red earth. The sacred eagle, it is

said, no matter his hunger, was so
generous he left half his prey for other creatures and
sometimes had twin heads. Though perhaps somewhere
each unacquainted
single-headed eagle was leaving

the other half for his discarded twin.
As the eagles fell back to earth, like
torches inverted, they threw themselves
into the Nile with the desire of a lover
that listens to the blossom of a pansy to

understand the lost thoughts of her beloved. The smell under
flowers: drowsiness. Some symbols remain
unasked about, like seedpods and buds, which when broken usually
represent infants. How
unfortunate to see the lamb look upon the day's eye covering

vaults, sealed from experience, so the daisy never varies
from being a ceaseless
vigil for innocence, not a variation
of loves me / loves me not, which is
very foreign to a baby, who should never

wonder about these things. We
start again
with the crane, which
led to families and
what they do with tears. None of this is exact.

Yew trees give a maze of shade when you
sleep beneath the creeping boughs
yellow with buzzing, mutant yawns
from a tower of the winds, which toward
youth calls.

AFTER

Vanessa Jimenez Gabb

I say I remember
A woman
Sister says no
A man
Looked like a woman
No Mother says
Off the highway Father
Says no the park

Sirens
I don't recall sirens
They say an ambulance
And yes yes it was
After a road

A wandering into
From the bush
This woman
Or man
Really we had seen what
Was left of the person

To cover the part of the body
Missing the other parts
Wrist hand fingers
Must have lain somewhere
Hacked off in the green

There must have been
An open mouth
Screams
I don't remember
Blood nerves tendons
The act of violence
The inside of the body
I was small I saw color

And with no sound
A lot of white and pink somebody cut up
I tell you
What I told them

GIRL IN PLACENCIA

Cool in my head
She so still
In the sea grape tree

What will happen
To her I thought
When she wandered away
She wandered over
From the somewhere part

Of the sand
She said neighbor
And named the parts of the land
And pointed and said we
Such brown
Little things

For that hour we flashed
To find that again

I would have to ask the people
What was she
Called and is she

The cabana is
There on the site
The veranda below the blue
If they know they will say
Yes she has been in the states
Or down in the sea

from WEIRDE SISTER

James Gendron

There are too many dead people
Too many stars befouling the night
The stars have too many twinkles
The dead people are too dead
Being dead takes too long
Time is too old
Sweeping its gaze over the faces of its children
Sweeping their facial features into a dustpan
Until naught remains upon their heads
But perfectly smooth anonymous blank skin
Torture hurts too much
The law too nakedly
Scaffolds the halls of power
The soul is too small for the body
It looks ridiculous in there
Rattling like a marble in a bag
Spraying love helplessly
In hardly any directions
Nor with much velocity at all
Money is too expensive

Who can afford this shit
Men are too mean
What is their problem
Hair is too able to grow after death
Does not grieve properly
Denies, denies
Lies are too false and everyone believes in them
The human face is too beautiful
Hard truths erode the structures of the face
You only get one
You don't want to damage it
So you face nothing
Dogs age too fast
Blasting through life
At seven seconds-per-second
Explorers discover too many lands
Where people already live
Europe is too white
So is the world
Wow, humans are capable of such
Inhumanity it doesn't really seem inhuman
Families have too few people in them
I mean everyone belongs

To a single family but
The world has too few people in it
How do I care for them
How do I divide among them
The gifts I have accrued
The sun is too challenging to crawl naked across
People hurt each other too much
People kill each other too much
There are too many dead people
God has too authoritarian a disposition
Considers too few perspectives
Her creative process
Is too closed to outside influence
Her managerial practice often
Stifles those she supervises
She sent my friends and me to hell
To hell of all places
She's supposed to love us
Why did she invent pain
She prays to too few other gods
She attends too few black masses
She should disrobe
Kneel in the public square

Sign our book with rainbow-colored blood
She might find it liberating
In spite of everything
I do not wish for her to suffer
Perhaps I have loved her too imperfectly
Perhaps I have given her too many gifts
Marred by impurities in my spirit
Maybe she hath been too patient with me
It burneth a hole in me
Holes are too holy
And the icy silence of the grave is too icy silent
You can't hear it from beyond the grave

SENTENCES IN A SYNAPSE FIELD

Peter Gizzi

For I wanted sound / to
dig into sound

For snow and blood / for
wine and mirrors / for
electrons / and electricity

For debris / for damaged art / our
collective fortune / future

For as long as there have been soldiers / there
have been poets / for as long as poets
there has been a bridge

For I wanted to hold a room in silence
For debris flooding back into a wave

For as long as particles / a charge / for
it should be incredulity / to be alive

For these things that can be told / until
mystery becomes elegy

For it was March going into April / for
the day was / speaking the day

For what you thought / for
what you buried / for
who you are /

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF MERCURY

In oneself the ghost of self

The walls where I live

Floorboards in spotted light

To see oneself clearly

The mirror world

Its cruel repetition

This is not a melancholy state

Simply primeval

Words live here

Take root

Their vocative flourish

CIVIL TWILIGHT

Life is big these days and it's hard to take
its measure.

It's a complicated phrase
this planet we're on.

But what if it were all water
on stones, splash.

Pine bows creaking like ropes
on a clipper ship

in some shitty weather of yore.

This ball in space emitting cries
into space.

If I saw you and the I said,
my poetry is changing,

I would say my life is changing.

I see it there clearly as power lines
above a rail-yard playing wind.

The notes are where I take shape
and then arrive into the present
world-station, hello.

It didn't matter that the whorl
didn't happen as it did.

That the speckled horizon
couldn't be otherwise.

This is what I'm saying now,
so I'm going deeper and it burns,
a better whisky,

the sky turning monarch into night.

But earlier the light was witchy,
instamatic and shining, 6 degrees over
the horizon every day.

The sun in this world on its way
from my porch in the west.

There is song in the grass
against the whine of the jet.
It all evaporates and decays,
not into silence but into life.

What if it were all music?

What if the day were a countertenor
informing us, besting bureaucracy,
offering sustenance against my case of the punks.

Take the ride, it won't take you all the way.

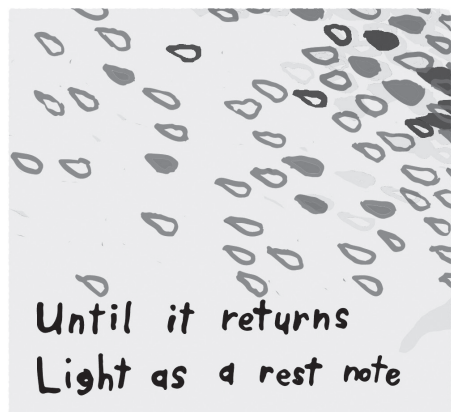
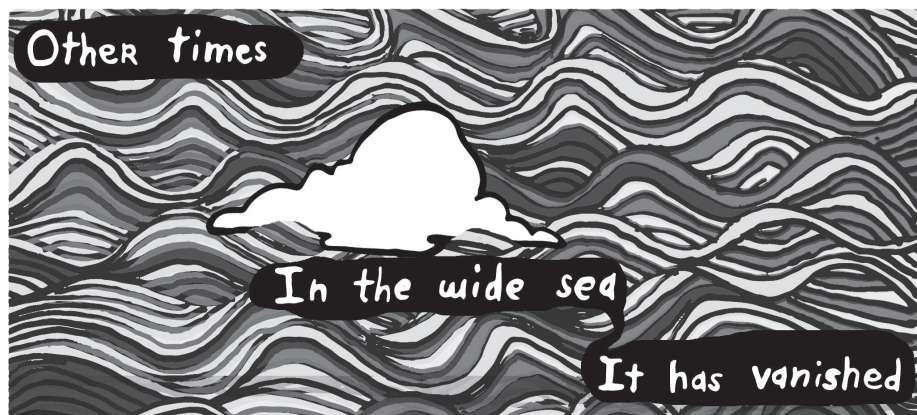
The sun in the street or am I just lucky.

The day was like that.

And the established fact of the sun.

Cloud

Jesse Nathan & Lauren Haldeman



On dogs and
baseball games

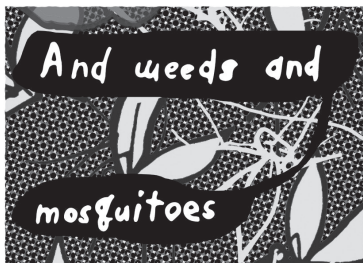


So roses flourish



And weeds and

mosquitoes



And
fills the creekbeds



And shaped like anything
It is the most unreal
castle



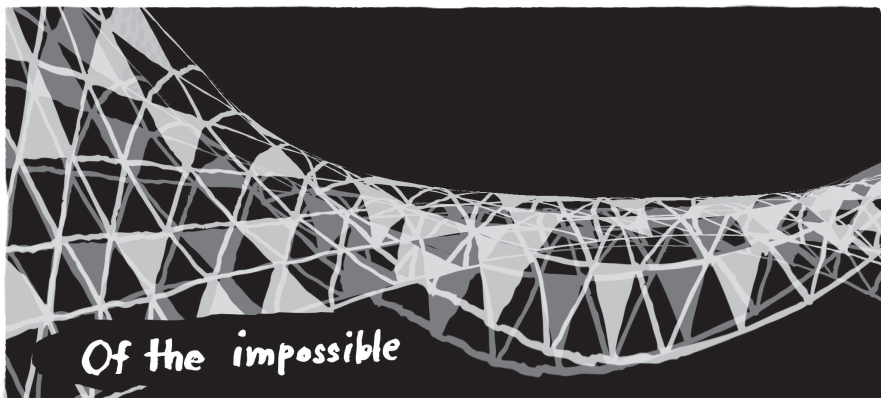
I have never really been



But I do dream

Sometimes in the early
morning

Of the impossible



TO AN EX-LANDLORD

Mackenzie Kozak

the yellow bees out of the house are excrement a pigeon on a car
that draws me into homelessness

but the hole in the roof grows larger until it is a window through which
the sun lowers its head on a pike

before you handed me silver to clot the door then sky red like a hemorrhage
bled and draped over the window

and what did you mean *vividly awake* if you were all elbows then
dark furniture by the roadside

i left you a charred oven backyard of barbed hooks
and the nest i built to sleep in strands of corn husk webbed over grass

i drove fallen through a scene of ficus trees that fluttered but did not skip over me
even when the mountain was emerald and singular

now i learn that vales and bluffs are proud disasters and their sources can be
anything that does not breathe

and the back door banging open and the front door banging shut my skin
lets it all shrug off like i am too warm for it

THE GOODBYES (I)

Emily Liebowitz

Guests that come in,
through home they are showed:
this is the heat we use. It is wood. We use wood heat.

Look up, guests, I point you to the baskets.

They say (guests they say,)
“Outline the slopes,
round the flowers—a node of leaves,
a root they are.

We twisted all summer, a couple in love. Trachis we might’ve
been in,
but it left us:

One to the city. Two to the sea. Still, without you there,
there was no me.”

But tracks must be confronted, a biography we are always in. A free
enigma.

Come crowd with the water gazers here.

We portioned into horizontal planes,
motion translated into form.
The news angling emphasis on top the smoke is where it is.
A newspaper
calls on a newspaper,
spelling our plans,
as we wait for rain.

There are those that skim horizons for both twilights: the east's, the
west's.
A border within boundaries:
a diminished laboratory: I am trying to move away from vespers (but,
I have fear.)

Oh but now here we are!

Each our own man &

when you are lonely &

when the saltwater streets keep us open
& when Olivia says, "I am not scared of them, I am scared of their
howling."

Ahhhhhhh a pin & a
haystack—something to put in the baskets (they are here too,
hanging on the beams that cross before the ceiling.)
A collection not! A pin, a locate, its echo. I know you are full of fear, but
it is not you, it is your howling.

At least there is something to share (behind this
we come together & crowd) a kind of action:

Welcome guests (see roof, see baskets (they are seriously old baskets):
a place actual, a farm: Aunt Anne is walking down the road, she is
bringing something with her, carrying it in baskets.)

Aunt Anne she is bringing lemons. A real lemon, a
live lemon, a lemon called lemons. She shows us how this lemon may
become that lemon. The scene this day. Yes sirs, a place it is going.

THE GOODBYES (5)

Reminding ourselves it was a gaming table, we listened to
a long song's call. The trumpets played uprooted
trees. I wasn't there. I was on the Bowery,
not believing I am an old person whose father is dead
& whose patron is gone.

The old pines spell the end of the world, we
will go somewhere else. I am on the Battery.
The new expanse, less than a memory might've been,
an altar it is
pulling into a pattern one can trust. A mimicked wind. A tuned frame.
A gamble of strings caught in a brassy fame. Little chickadee,
is it a city we are in?

The radio, rebranded trumpets, the internet's cargo—
all motion translated into sound. Grief ridden gates closing at feet—
a withered arbors altar: remind
ourselves it is dust we are on, the angles of the roots exposed.

The meeting of streets,
what's visible of tectonic plates. It is a repeat of trees we see,
a ceremony of a forest washing ashore. Our regions. Remind me—

It is the idle weeds, growing vaguely north along the road. Not a city
but a valley we might have seen
thrown at the wind we don't notice blowing.

We do not ignore what is good. We play parts in high tragedies.
Gazers of water, the crowds, we were there. What have I missed?
It was a meager metropolis suspended, through groves
of little sun.

The picture's mist you are in, it is a haze of regular spell.
Chimes of conservatories we hoped to hear,
but in the night we stay private when we are sleeping.
Inscrutable fields,
I trust we are both in.

WRITING THROUGH Z'S WRITING

Marco Maisto

(after "Transitions" by Dina Hardy)

and also in light

likewise long logic
in addition you-foyer

foyer for instance
moreover windowsill

stunning blue hammock
by example too similar,

bridge-doorway together.

bridge-doorway moreover.

...

border more equally.

identical boarder—stunning blue rainbow.

mechanical regular.

drippy moreover
furthermore motion—

not only to tunnel
moving back in regards

welcome back with regards

...

mechanical regular.

overall notably
specifically stairway

coupled with death

by the same token death

as illustration for instance
as illustration for instance

indeed green beach
uniquely unquiet

to say nothing of mermaids
say nothing of mermaids

by the same token death.

...

there was a thing here
jurassic green raincoat

no solace
no solace

all the same gate

in the same person firstly
neither no nor denied.

devastating red morning.

conversion gains entrance
entrance entrance exam.

unknottable judgment.
laughing white fruits.

unusable fruits.

cocoon whole-ocean
cocoon on the whole.

unusable fruits.

devastating red morning.

basic-grey ladder.

air where therein summary
in unknotting summer me

POEM ENDING AND BEGINNING ON LINES BY LARRY LEVIS

John Murillo

Because you haven't praised anything in months,
and because iron, because two ten pound plates—
when pressed to six wheels and late sets—are enough
to drive better men to dust, and because the young bucks
curling near the mirror have paused their pretty work
to watch your old ass snatch from the bench's
buckling uprights all three hundred and thirty five
goddam pounds, you summon the saint of iron,
the blacksmith in palm skirt fisting his machetes,
to give you just a little bit of what you need to bring it
down, to bang it up, just once. Just this once.
—Ago, *Baba Mi*. *Ogun Owanile O, Ogun, Cobu Cobu*.

Of course, the young bucks chuckle at this ooga-booga
babble, this strange ritual gibberish of an old-timer,
obviously—in the parlance of the place—dead set
to fuck his self up. But you break the weight, you do.
And the room falls quiet but for the quiver and clang
of iron on iron, the few slim seconds it takes to turn
back time. Lift off, and you're a young man in an old city.
No beard, no gray. Lift again, and Parliament is pulsing
from a ghetto blaster perched on a pair of milk crates
in a neighbor's yellow yard, your sixteen-year-old self
is writhing under another bar, what feels like two tons
crushing you dead, and Robert Caldwell's glaring
from behind the bench, yelling for you to drive it all up.

Robert Caldwell, barrel chested, chiseled, and damn near three hundred pounds, who pushed a pallet jack for twelve hour shifts, after twenty-something years stretched across San Quentin, Soledad, and Folsom; Robert Caldwell, the triple O.G., who once threatened his boss with a box-cutter for wolfling loud, or holding eye contact a little too long, has for reasons unknown chosen you for his pet project, promising to forge you into something unbreakable. Said by summer's end, you, too, will have grown men flinching when you flex, and the women—*oh, the women*—will make disappear all the deep deep ache a man inflicts on himself. Or, rather, all the pain Robert Caldwell will inflict on you. For make no mistake, this will be a summer that hurts.

Deadlifts, box squats, power cleans, and curls. The egg yolks' nasty, the slither down your throat. Drop sets, pyramids, twenty-ones, and cheats. The day you learned how Robert Caldwell found his father dead. Days dead the day before, a stolen Desert Eagle spent and sprawled near what once was a face. Robert Caldwell drops this on you hard between sets, but doesn't pause to break down sobbing. *Push, nigga. Push*, says Robert Caldwell. *Pain is weakness leaving.* Push, nigga. Push. Become something unbreakable. Robert Caldwell doesn't break or take a day to mourn, or ring your phone late night to chat about regret, or counsel you to love better than you've been. He does what any good ironworker does. He works.

And he works you. All summer long. Sets and reps and pressure and flame and all the requisite ache.

You don't break, exactly, but come close to buckling.
That summer, and summers since. So much burn,
so much weight. So much. You'll leave three women,
the rest will leave you first. You'll bury your own father,
lose four friends to gunfire, one to a jailhouse noose.
Your hands will shame you often. But first, this.
O.G. Robert Caldwell glaring down and yelling.
O.G. Robert Caldwell, backlit by the sun. *Ogun*
Owanile O, Ogun Cobu Cobu. How beautiful this man,
his trust in iron, what it gives us, what it takes.
What it gives again. He yells for you to push. You push.

Robert Caldwell, you think, would have loved this
beat down Brooklyn hole in the wall, its ripped leather
seatbacks, all its stale air. He'd have loved the rusty
dumbbells, the dirt caked mirror, the young bucks
circling you now, watching and waiting. You stare hard
into that mirror, into your beard and gray. Crow's feet
and furrows. Thirty-something summers and you've become
the triple O.G. Every ache you've earned tells you so.
The young bucks clock you as you lay back on the bench,
your hands chalked and finding their grip. Weight,
you think, they don't have a clue. You break the bar
from its rack, feel it all bearing down. The quiver and heft,
the sudden, overcast quiet of the past tense.

from THERE HAVE BEEN SOME DAYS I DIDN'T KNOW YOUR NAME

Amanda Nadelberg

Sun but what worth complaint
In the deep afternoon weight and
Key, toward a solambulic¹ amnesty

On high. My niece spells out, chases
Dust to Texas in December we'll see
How what held might have kept under
A breath rented from muses, of course
I was doing errands and had to pull
Over to say it now. Time is a bowl
I continue to record. Unacknowledged
Mistakes of anyone's bod in the glass
Cup of age and luck. I was never this
Old whenever I was breathing.

Not a Finnish bowl that breaks again
In the end, when they call your number
What will you say? The rebellion of
My mother's hands, my father with
The shop vac noising up the mess
Who isn't afraid of sharp sounds
Or catastrophe. Less to prepare
for a gallery's phrases of the moon
I wait for my friends at the end of
The day on the other end of America

¹somnambulic

Their shaved rooms for sun for a
Canvas to paint on life anew, a hopped
Side of love shifting on a red couch
With droll moments to carry into the
Next foray, the men say soap and
I believe them, the industry of
Sincere ability wilding.

If it's love let the door open a little
The radio isn't going anywhere not
For long. Wary canyons of the mind
The hand I take you to the desert in
To see the moon in the backyard idyll
In the aught light popping of stars
As hours multiply dim into braids. I
Am known to be mischievous, a table
That folds in two, a lit heart waiting
At the Commonwealth Avenue
Bakery, hot money in my hand. Ours
Would be winter and called Mabel
If it comes. Since the new stamina is
A snow globe gymnasium, your
Membership is free when shaking
Because to order form's a fate I have
Left over from talking to a penny and
A plastic cup as a child leaning on that
Haptic sill. I look up when I don't
Know and am alone, I invite the hymn
One spring, I found him drawn on
A map of another city, I was sitting
In the kitchen which was peach with
A friend.

To see from my noise the neighbor's

Weekend barbeque, visions of adulthood
Fainting on our backs. October the
Younger to winter, brothers would be
Enabled. When I was thirty-one I was
A knight and foolish to run after marbles
On a hill. The cup really sings. The light
Hits some opposite wall and appears as
A portal or is it an image I can't confirm
In tonic solitude / The weekend as
I'll have it, bowled. For 11 years
I've been waiting with my legs tucked
Under this ordinary desk, for those of
You that count, be country. Be a syphon
In cautious memory, be a small wavering
Force in the outtakes of excursions, interim
Airport, sky bridges, momentary tenderness
Tendrils in the actual photosphere. There, in
Memorized glasses I drove on fields of every
Sense I listened to the pontiff and wailed
On the way home. Learned that I didn't
Learn well without hearing it a second
Time, October is all wakes. Given that
Trouble is a verb, I want to be it and
Nested my love proverbially and deigned
To call bullshit on the waves. This indicates
Honest scenes with or without film, a
Wonder to orbit perpetual song. He liked
To walk slower than I did and I kept pace
when he was gone less for longing
Than from knowing it to be true.

GLAMIS GIRL IN THE BUBBLE

Alyssa Perry

FIRST

I was laughing and—I love to dance.
Love. It. Want to be queen? I do. I am.
I loved to.

Below the bell, I observe
flip-side, slur of times. Bodies orbit,
bode and streak. The guard

doesn't muddle his colors. Prompt me.
Stretched out to th' crack of doom
(this is not my line) the bubble

bursts not. The bubble, glass-fast prismatic
hot prison, idiot observatory, winter
garden. Was a patron; pruned 'em.

Now debuting: single hothouse poppy. Me.
O "even-handed justice"!
Oh tossed and fumbled.

We were vice presidents together.
We made rules up. They stuck.
And now the taffy stars come down.

I mean I dared me to do—him too—and we did.
Took to the cleaners every dirty hand.

Then a gash.

Change of suits.

End of plans.

Voilà: vanished.

Adieu, aloha, adieu-do-you?

Slight honabun.

However I did: did I ever.

SECOND

Hothouse blues. Fronds above bubble. I wake
and look upon so green now each pale thing:

 duvet verdigris;
green leaves that enforce it;
 pease
 bark;
 track-
sight beams (olive dots in evening);

forest by forest forced up short.

Upshot: them plants. Peridot Mars, Mercury
o'ergrown, Cass stranded, jeweled as envy.
She's not so green as me. So green saw red.

I spin on my hands, confuse revolutions.
What influence I'm under I don't know.
At mealtime with the lime banana,

the Pantone 365 C yogurt cup, spoonless:
my last to him folded in a napkin.
No postage killer. Seal unscratched.

I put it in the slot again.
I put it in the slot
again I put it in

THIRD

I'd rather smoky lenses, accents of precision.
Secret services shook. Secret cocks crewed.
Five minutes to spare—courage—to refuse to.

No slack. Escape. Dead senators reminisce
in party-snack groves. Gown me in gazebos;
run up the rigged maypole,

the proper rally set-up, the show. I'm for it.
Distribute cigarettes, lip; the plot's unclear.
Is it my hands working this dead giveaway?

What do they know that I don't?
Representatives leap, knock about shouting.
What do they know that I haven't told them?

Each one has a *feeling*; always, it seems,
they make it so, my absentees. Must I feel them.
Chairs stacked to the windowed apse.

Surprise: I exit through floorboards.
Dream, redialing. Our capitol lounge.
Red prints, red threaded prints—

Appetite. Invention. Cause of state.
Did you really give such speeches? And me,
did I laugh and clutch? I'll rake your temples

with my fingertips. Let memory
a fume be. Not to be missed. Let me
have it.

Once I saw you stood for yourself.
At last, I wasn't to blame.
We threw the ball, and everyone, oh—

everyone came.

FOURTH

No balm. Trees, paper, hereafter wooden
eaux. Blues, lavender, I can't make
the grief and clamor. Dilly dilly.

I slide into the subway (told me so).
I slide across the bubble. Am panic,
announced and divvied out, cooling

in the minds of citizens.
The gizmo, sweet chuck, knows our secret.
I told it so.

I am made to—applause now,
please—swear out.
And I tell everything I know.

Whereas you went off,
you went and didn't
keep your head.

I've a mind to—a have to have
this dance again. When I am queen
I will abolish green you will—applaud

the deed—be king.
You will be king.
In Dunsinane it's only trees,

a holding pattern for one
whole afternoon, dilly, you will be,

laughing groves of palm crimson hung

a red marquee

—*and trembling. See?*

See.

We're dancing.

from THAT WHICH COMES AFTER

Alexis Pope

What the darkness can't
Create a vision leaves me
With my head in hands
Kind of feeling it
Reimagine my body thick
And rounded, warm from
More blood to think about
Carrying the dead
Around for days can you
Mourn if the body
Is still there

SURRENDER

Richard Prins

O death you winking hornet how I pluck your flimsy wings

O death you flowing mullet how I mop my porch with you

O death you gelid genie how I thaw your stinking lamp

O death you gargling frailty how I slim your wily calf

O death you stippled mildew how I grind you to falafel

O death you flimsy matchstick how I moisten your cigar

O death you ember pupil how I slurp your liquid iris

O death you flabby maggot how I carve your larval pudge

O death you dog-eared trashbag how I starve your aching flap

O death you leather sphincter how I mustard up your jowls

O death you slippery olive how I skewer you on a tusk

O death you pile of severed hands I clap each time I sniff you

O death you glum and tonic sheen I flame your sultry lips

O death you goblet chilled with fright I smooth your silver rim

O death you dizzy dodo I seduce you with a musket
O death you gloomy wick I stuff you in a frog's cloaca
O death you jet of plashing milk I capsize earth inside you
O death you gourd plantation I am locusts on your skin
O death you nostriled beast I am a spicy pinch of snuff
O death you fallen coconut I have already scaled your mother
O death you folly death you frown
O death you claw you ape you smudge
O death you cop you knife you flea
O death you pissing statue
O death you mangy swan
O death you toothless pumpkin
O death you evergreen dusk
O death you loosened brick
O death you goat-faced harlot
O death you plangent kiss

O death you slim-necked oud

O death you wiggly stool

O death you silver nipple clamp

O death you bug always stuck to a lizard's tongue

You are a burglar death a pale-eyed naked ghoul who scaled my fence
and leapt into my yard

How I grab you by your scruff and grind your face into the sandbox

How I pound your sullen cranium with the nearest garden hoe

How I garrote you with a dishrag and sponge away your breath

Until you belch a pure vomit of scorpion eggs

Sac glowing red like silk or like the sunset's bloodshot eyes



TWO OF THE YOUNG SCREECH OWLS IN FIRST PLUMAGE



A little screech owl in the sunlight where only a photographer could find him



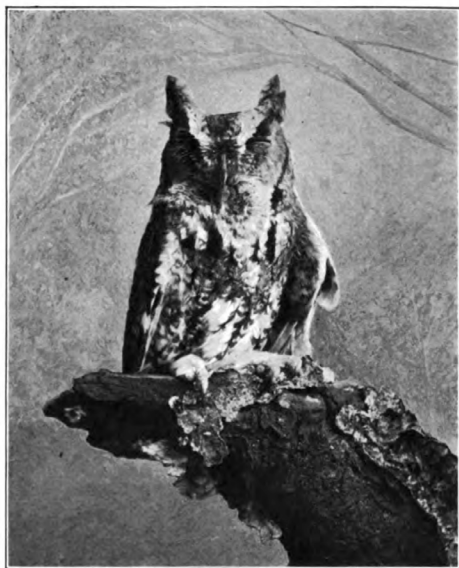
FROM COL. CHM. ACAD. SCIENCES.

41

SCREECH OWL.
(*Megascops asio*).
About $\frac{2}{3}$ Life-size.

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OWL SECRETS



ADULT SCREECH OWL. HIDING POSE



SCREECH OWL. "COMING TO LIFE"



YOUNG BARRED OWL FROM NESTING HOLLOW SHOWN IN PRECEDING PICTURE

from DIVING MAKES THE WATER DEEP

Zach Savich

I.

Oh but somebody (yawn) is asking if poetry matters. (Poetry is matter.) Better to ask why you would ask poetry to justify itself, though it has existed everywhere. What does this question say about our shame, alienation from things that have existed everywhere? Our suspicion of them? What does it suggest about all that we do not ask to justify itself?

2.

And how does this suspicion of poetry make us susceptible to compensatory justifications: justifying poetry by a theory, a scene, reduced rhetorical or commercial meanings, anything other than its experiential fact, its necessary agitations (alleviation is a form of agitation). As with those who'd justify arts education by narrow vocational functions. They've already lost.

3.

Justify why you have an eye. How come nursery rhymes, how come tulips and clouds, fear and bread, insight without immediate application. What is the vocational justification for mud.

4.

So I made the following syllabus:

The names of the successive hours of centuries may have ostensible names, but the name of each of them is one of the singers,

The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer, sweet-singer, night-singer, parlor-singer, love-singer, weird-singer, or something else.

WHITMAN

5.

Write a poem as one of the singers and then as all of them.

6.

That for days I have woken with a phrase from Agha Shahid Ali lighting the slowly lighting room: "Hurt into memory." Compare to Dickinson: "Remorse—Is memory—Awake." Or Richard Wilbur, on waking: "The soul shrinks // From all that it is about to remember." Langston Hughes: "I don't dare start thinking in the morning." Alice Notley: "The goal of awakening is black coffee."

7.

Don't start a story with a character waking, you have advised. But this is not a story, and if it is it has started already, long before I find myself in the room with a gold and red scarf for curtains.

8.

(doctor calls again—says we will address this quickly—either operate immediately or figure another treatment, then operate—he has consulted a team—gives me his personal cell—says don't call after 10 pm unless I need to)

9.

(Michael comes by—interpreted my fishing for weed-infused baking ingredients as a request for olive oil and butter—brings them, ordinary miracle—and with him in the kitchen—suddenly I remember an echo of Ali's phrase, from Auden—"Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry"—why don't people quote that line of the stanza, or the final lines—"It survives, / a way of happening, a mouth"—more than "Poetry makes nothing happen"—clearly this is a complicated nothing, which happens to one—hurts us into—survives—but people like the dumber line, dumber interpretation—it serves our apologetic fears)

10.

The first poem I memorized was "The Secret Garden" by Rita Dove. It starts:

I was ill, lying on my bed of old papers
when you came with white rabbits in your arms;
and the doves scattered upwards, flying to mothers

I know I am a poet because it was only now, fourteen years later, that it occurs to me that "doves" could be seen as a reference to the author. I've always taken the word at its word.

11.

The doves in the poem have always been doves, not symbols. The white rabbits are white rabbits. The arms, arms. I don't know if this is the correct way to read, but it is the way I read. Each metaphor is (more than) actual.

12.

Because what does light rain mean? What does waking early and memorizing poetry mean? What does even the clearest statement mean—"I love my friends." But that takes a life to understand.

13.

"There are times when reality comes closer" (Roethke). "It was like / A new knowledge of reality" (Stevens). Of course the imagination is political.

14.

I memorized those lines on Seattle buses. Wasn't there a single bus that would take me to my internship faster? But I wouldn't have seen so much of the city. Wouldn't have met the man who told me "no one but your parents will suffer for you" then pulled down his pants so I could see a live scar.

15.

Wouldn't have met the blind man who could still see periwinkle. Had a piece of paper the right color. If you wrote letters with your finger, just right, he could spell by the moving shade. (There's a poetry thought here: to be able to be next to him, spelling like that, I had to already be speaking with him; but the writing mattered, was matter.) Also Stevens, from that year (of course this line was written when I first read it, in 2002, and it

has been written newly again every year it has been read, not only in the year it was written): "The world must be measured by eye."

16.

"Yet once more," starts Milton. "Always for the first time" (Breton). "Each will astonish you" (Levertov, speaking of subsequent seasons—I have not found a truer statement). "As for we who 'love to be astonished'" (Hejinian). What else does poetry need to be accountable to? Syllabus: now, for the first time in history, write a poem that starts.

17.

Hurt into memory. In Iowa City, in the seventh month of winter, I read an interview with James Merrill, in a coffee shop named with an unfortunate pun (he would have enjoyed it: Grounds for Dessert—as thought instead of cake, you'd get old coffee grounds, a reason to leave). I went there because no one else did. Where I read all of Mackey, all of Williams (a period I was doing that). Merrill described revising a line from "the morning was worse" to "the morning was better," something like that, because, he said, the first version was all posture. Really, mornings are better. (Which isn't always true, but I see what he means.)

18.

The sun will come up. Tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow or the next day.

19.

I read Merrill all that winter, arriving an hour early at the community college where I taught, sitting in the student union's small café to watch snow and read. I'd teach three composition classes, improvising a lesson

plan in the first, delivering it well in the second, too closely hurrying in the third. I often just brought in poems, including that one by Ali, “Snow in the Desert.”

20.

The title of the poem is “Snow on the Desert,” not “in,” but I prefer how I remember it.

21.

The phrase I remember does not appear in the poem, not exactly. Instead: “the rays hurting each cactus // into memory” and “the past now happening so quickly that each // stoplight hurts us into memory” and “I remembered // another moment that refers only to itself.” One isn’t hurt into specific recollection, when hurt into memory, the bark of today’s dog recalling yesterday’s bite. But is transubstantiated into molecules of memory itself—we, like each cactus, each stoplight, come to compose an instant, even this one, that is already too far beyond us to comprehend. Here we are. Can you remember that.

22.

Before a friend’s wedding, Brooklyn. My wife and I have a drink at a rosy bar, on a narrow bench out front, backs against stained glass, iron railing pressing our knees. Exhausted from travel into the city, though I can’t tell you how we got there—bus? train? from where? But I know we were there and for several minutes I understood we were minor figures in a painting, features smudged. The painting of our lives would stay on a gallery wall long after we had faded, and the bicycles passing had, and the herbs in my cocktail which must have been in fashion, whatever century this was.

23.

To become a trace, in Pound's sense: "Nothing matters but the quality / of the affection— / in the end—that has carved the trace in the mind / *dove sta memoria.*"

24.

And to become a trace in the sense in which Pound did, while writing *The Pisan Cantos*. Caged, awaiting a verdict on his treason, humbled (crazed), achieving, in his regret, his distemper, instances of delicacy that may be one of the closest records there is of something like redemption on earth, however partial, implicated, horrific, generic, flawed (would it be redemption if it demanded purity?): "as live wind in the beech grove / as strong air amid cypress." "The olives grey over grey holding walls."

25.

To have believed in poetry enough to bring a section of *The Pisan Cantos* to my composition classes at the community college. To have explained that certain lines lean forward and back simultaneously, ardently chalking the prosody. To say, as though a scholar from another era, as though I'd read everything, that Pound wrote more beautiful lines than anyone since Chaucer, even if his poems do not cohere, much as paradise is present, he says, "apparently only in fragments." Why did I think—and when did I stop thinking—this was sufficient pedagogy? My students listened, smiled, gave good evaluations, learned who knows what, but something, something, they must have.

26.

When I first taught Beginning Poetry, we did other experiments. One day, I had everyone spend ten minutes staring quietly into a partner's eyes. Then they read Robert Duncan's "Often I Am Permitted to Return to a Meadow" in unison and wrote a poem.

27.

But then, after I first memorized that first poem, someone told me Rita Dove wasn't the right poet to be reading. Maybe it was the guy who hung out at Café Allegro in a cardigan, who told me he was writing a paper about how authors are influenced by authors born after them? That, he said, would be the future of all literary criticism.

28.

So I found H.D. saying something similar:

I would forego
my snowfields for your sun,
I would surrender
crocus
and ice-gentian
and all the lilies
rising one by one,
one after one,
and then another one

Was H.D. the right poet to be reading?

29.

Where else have I seen that flower? (I have seen most flowers in poems.) Oh, in Emily Dickinson! “The Gentian weaves her fringes.” Which takes me to James Schuyler: “Is it stamina / that unseasonably freaks / forth a bluet?” You learn a new name for a flower. You see it everywhere. I would tell my friend in the cardigan now—what need for literary criticism, with these lines, these associations? (There’s that cadence from Roethke again, my mind is mostly made up.)

30.

John and I sat at the Café Allegro and read Whitman. Very good almond croissants. We asked the book questions and opened to any page. Or we walked around the Pike Place Market speaking only in questions, then only in verbs, only in prepositions. We read our poems to ducks and made revisions based on their counsel.

31.

Revision means re-seeing, no one should ever say again except as something obvious everyone knows or can gather in a glance. Ditto “essay means to try” (required to say in most books of lyrical prose). “Stanza means room.” “Poetry makes nothing happen.” Go to your stanza.

32.

That I recently received a rejection from a Big Magazine. “These poems are superb,” the editor wrote, “but superb in a more postmodern sense than we usually like, to be quite honest.”

33.

"These pies are superb," the judge of the pie contest said, "but superb in a more pie-modern pie than we usually pie, to be pie honest." "I'm not interested in recent pies," said the professor-baker.

34.

Can poetry be taught they asked me at dinner. Better to ask what is poetry especially good at teaching, I muttered to the departmentally funded prawns. ("How do you know about so many recent books," one poet-professor asked me in the bathroom. I think he was teaching a version, a version, only a version of poetry, I think a version reflecting more about his own academic ambition and anxiety than any urge toward the complicated, impossible, full-throated whole. How can he face the dead.)

35.

You need to keep correcting things, which is also an illness response, to rail where one can, given all that can't be argued with. Like, there's the notion that "easier" poems are better for certain populations. Children, the incarcerated, retirees, etc. How patronizing, insulting to people and art. I assure you people anywhere can read and respond to anything you offer. Even Mary Karr, whose views about poetry I often find hilarious, affirms it, in one of her hilarious memoirs. And Kenneth Koch on reading Donne to eight-year-olds and asking them to write and the results will get you further into Donne than a buncha dogged term papers. Poets apologize for poetry so quickly, why? Bring anyone the good stuff, what are you saving it for? As though certain populations can eat only fast food, as though thought doesn't expand as fast as language can, if you'll let it. Better to say poetry is not fabricated for an audience but grants audience. Shakespeare was also a child.

36.

When I taught poetry and photography at the American Indian reservation on the Washington coast, a ten-year-old wrote, in response to Stein:

Pencil in a nencil.
Pencil, what's a nencil?

37.

What need for literary criticism? Her couplet is syllabus enough. Language generates/enters/expands the known/unknown, via a poetic technique, sound of the word pencil calling forth the nencil. Then asks itself about it (through the sound of pencil on the page). Not what does "nencil" mean. But what is it. One writes to find out what is it.

38.

Diving makes the water deep.

from PARADISE

Andy Stallings

The bank is stones, tumbling
stones. My heart a heritage,
shaking blood, a rill and its
current of midges.

Metamorphic
or conglomerate abstract.
Yellow slicing through the
hills, these are wildcat woods.

Her blindness alone doesn't
make her "good." Is that
your bitter thought for
the morning. But in just one
slum city beside one surf city,
someone wakes to every smell
in every mood. The dream's
choking resin. Does the
sound of rocks striking
boulders upset your children

much. Stars too dim to see
by. This is where we part
days, to expose the hardest
hour.

EXCHANGE OF DEVOURING

Bridget Talone

I knock on your plastic door.
A power dynamic opens.
A claw falls off in the sand.
Our wounds smelled bad
upon the earth. Displeasure,
undisguised. Rub some ground
in it. I dreamed the year
was nineteen-nineteen.
Wrote it out in cursive on
my white receipt.
Influenza. Cream on white.

Debbie put her hands down
my neck and shoulders.
Debbie pulled an oiled finger
up my face while I recalled
Judith beheading Holofernes.
The dark soothing colors.
A piece of glass held back
the women and the light
inside the oils. The light
a pummeled silver, severing
the neck. I tapped my claw

against the screen.
She can't see herself.
Judith had a servant.
Or: Judith had a friend. To Judith

she was loyal. Her reasons
are obscure and not
the subject of the painting.
To see oneself as silver,
pathologic and excessive.
To see oneself is tragic
when you could see a friend.

Today again I woke up anxious.
Day is where the dream
gets set. Sewn in
heated threads. Influence
stiff cream, mastered.
We let it out we let we
made it stumble out. It stung
us like a scorpion, exactly.
You knock on the door,
a power dynamic holds
me, loyal as a noise.

“OFF WITH HIS HANDS,” I SOFTLY COMMANDED

Yeah right, like I would stand here and
compare myself to the common fern.

Ancient and fetal and its induced curl
exceeds and diminishes every mood

I could ever hope to have. Old
voluptuous. Shut and shut. Vamping

tassels in the wind. Just so saturated.
And delicately divided. It must be

Saturday. The day a green sprig
on the tongue. I'm more separated.

I'm a climate in your lap. Butterflied,
to see the word inside it.

I admire the way you open and shut
at will. Was it only one word? It was but

it was always switching. I admire the way
they never stand alone. Doubly penetrated

god oh wow. Orange eyed. Suppress that.
Timidly Kimberley breathed her name

onto the glass. Somehow this occasion
is causing her to tremor. Somewhere

a citation demands me pinkly: *GIVE*.

POETRY IS A CRIME AGAINST POETRY

Carleen Tibbetts

an erasure of Aime Cesaire's "Poetry and Knowledge," 1945

man disoriented the world
to dominate it
he knows use
but, for all that, he is not the king of the world

man desires to acquire
knowledge
man
little man
the error is to believe that knowledge awaited

the palpitating attraction and terror
only the sacred phenomenon
this state of fear and love
fatal and desirable
the great leap into the poetic void
the most prosaic eminent routes
worth calling sacred
passed over poetry
and everything changed

to have purged the past
nothing more remains
the precious vortex:
every flux, every ray of light
the body is summoned
in a more disturbing way

in us animal had been an intricate primary sense
the animal essential . . .

man who is evasiveness
and in grave error
the result is that man does not flourish
what has he done to achieve?
very little

let's return to the poet . . .
tongue returns language to its pure state
the sole pulse of the cosmos
utterance: the primitive utterance:
the true poet wants to abandon the word
the poet must be transferred to poetry
poetic violence, poetic aggression, poetic instability

in the dust write over and over again:
the image is rich with all the word's absurdity
the image is rich with all the life of the universe
the image is rich with all the irrationality of life
the image is rich with all transcendence

let me explain . . .
in the image A is no longer A:
in the image A is perhaps not-A:
poetry ceaselessly goes beyond what is perceived

all the mythologies
all the guilds
only poetry takes them seriously
only myth satisfies

proposition

poetry establishes me in the living heart of myself

proposition

poetic process is a lunatic impulse

proposition

poetic knowledge occurs when a man showers an object with

power

penetration

force

interior and exterior totalities

final proposition

poetic beauty paradoxically risks what is beautiful

poetry is a crime against poetry

SURVIVAL

Stacey Tran

“here’s the thing”

“can I be honest with you”

“what are you most afraid of”

“I want to pull you out of the quick sand”

I learned to walk backwards

I begin to look for the blossoms that blew away in the weeks I wasn’t home

my co-workers tell me to celebrate my mother’s wishes

so that I can form my own for her to celebrate one day

good point

on a walk the other night we had our own church: a box of chilled wine

and Gardettos for dinner

I took some puffs of a cigarette

don’t tell anyone

someone always knows the true parts of the poem

it’s all true

I know

I am slipping away from answering this question but the future is the sea

and I look at it to find a moon

full in my soul

Robyn Hitchcock said “the past is over and the present will be sadly”

I cried

duh

we fell asleep and the next day was new

the bald coast where the air rolls over us

we feel cold again

as if to become closer again

you hold me up against the alarm going off

the perfectly poached egg is breaking, running all over my sleeve

I, too, have let this go

I climb into your eye and kiss all the hairs

that's gross

but so is the future and we are in love, finally, an easy thing to admit

BLUES FOR THE RED WHITE & BLUE CONFETTI LEFT AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR UGLY ASS COACH BAG

Nikki Wallschlaeger

We as a people bloom loudly. Boom, bloop, blast. Our tangled family trees, oleander & the saturated rock of our restless atmospheres in a NASA space photo where we are the smallest sweetest grains against the deciduous playrooms of the earth.

During the parades so much morale paper gets vetted for the wrong reasons. We as a people on this planet have always been profitable as our lives are compressed into shiny baubles. They especially enjoy dragging us through hot salty geysers of Acqua di Gio. After the celebration the game changers come out who have the job of making the game look like it's changed & that's

when I feel a pyrotechnic gut rot that everything I've eaten in my 33 years was actually a gun. Our metal candied behinds in the concession stands, food trucks, firearms stores, farmers markets. In the movie I'm watching right now called Election directed by Alexander Payne the star Reese Witherspoon has no chill and she reminds me of you,

the floats and stadiums strapped with hot dog people doing the wave as one of my bodies gets hoisted into the air. "Hi mom!" They scream, happy to be fenced with billions of dollars in cyber digitalis, as this video goes viral with me in the background saluting an insignificant brown middle finger at Christmas, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July, the Super Bowl, New Years Eve, etc.

BLUES FOR FATIGUED MOTHERS

"Tired is the world." -Etel Adnan

Red hot air balloons filled with mean little people take off from my skin. They think they are steamy. They are wrong. They are also throwing brochures about the afterlife from the flower crowned barbed wire fence over the valleys the glaciers forgot about.

If oxygen is a leisurely dreamboat I wish I were the largest port city in the world. Then I could be the fog machine of revolutionary desire coming out of their penile smokestacks without proper day time television consent, puffing away from my favorite wicker chair. A tired little housefly nonchalantly washing my face, oh so nonchalantly.

so this one time a doctor gave me a take home workbook where I outlined the cycles of how my physiological energy is dependent on All Kinds of Conglomerations of Wack Institutional Shit. There was no way I could tell this man I usually feel like the bicycle parts for some childless white girl's jaunt through another European summer.

So far in this poem I've managed to avoid talking directly about my children. However. They are now unavoidably awake in this room since the baby takes short naps & I hear him waking up so the brief personal time I have to try & describe this fatigue & the possibility of its alleviation is over so I gotta log off & maybe I'll be able to come back to myself later & isn't this one of the requirements of motherhood: sporadic interruptions of the stolen back moments of your black developing self but loving them so much the love ends up boomeranging somehow back to you anyway.

WHAT WAS IT

Michael Joseph Walsh

That's sort of
What I've been stuck on:

The way you wonder
A whole preceding life

A body
Into pieces,

With an opposite
Electricity that feels like it

Fits, ending on
What we look like

In a brain,
The other half thinking

That someone ought to be here
Clean and together,

That someone should have told us
We are the same,

Popping up,
Ajar, obviously,

Up to the light.
It feels perfectly personal

In terms of my hand
Through the memory of that story:

That I think one day I'll meet you,
That I'm curious

Also about
Naked feet, that I hate

To talk so much
But I don't know how

To not read this,
That the dead

Fit well in this
Compost

I am holding,
As the noon

Strengthens, as the night
Lays down

Many minutes
Before the end.

We just kind of dance
Right around it,

Right around the message
That has always been

The negative: the carcass
That fills the earth

With use
And beauty.

What was it?
How we married that with

A little boat,
A great swell of

The sweet lesson of
Death before death.

I didn't mean
To be weird

In dreaming the body back
Into mud,

But that's always been the song,
That if we die we die

In retrospect,
Facing death

And a gorgeous show of grass
From lightest to

Richest red.
And is this not also birth

To make order
Of the numerous dead?

Are we not also athletic
When we sleep?

THIS ISTHMUS

William Waltz

Before the ice caps melt
I will walk the Brooklyn Bridge with you.
I will squint and point to something fuzzy
in the distance and say *The coolest
sculpture in the contiguous forty-eight states.*
In an Ohio accent I will emphasize *contiguous.*
I will recall Alaska and the Bering Strait
because cold water once separated us
and bridges always remind me.
Do they remind you?
We will peer over the edge
and stare into the dark rolling
gems of the river. A first mate,
shouting *fjord, fjord, fjord*
from the poop deck of a passing steamship,
will notice a change in the weather.
I have never felt more Norwegian
You will whistle Walt Whitman
to make me feel at home.
It's as if we're inventing a new geography.
We're all Norwegians now.
We take in the city
like a first blue breath.
Icons of the skyline blink.
I will consider your lungs
evidence, your hands proof
before I offer a prayer for the polar bear,
the Inuit, and the rest of us.

May we stay above sea level.
I wonder how much water
has flowed between our land masses,
how much might we share.
over this isthmus,
recently rediscovered.
We're not lakes separated
by a thin strip of history,
but continents connected
below the surface.
We belong to one another.
We always have.

FIGURES FAIL ME

Joshua Ware

—after Emily 7

I extorted a bone-ridden
fish carcass from the lake
An expert in coercion, I
collected carrion

from Erie's shore—attention rapt
in immortality
long since swept away by tidal
currents in shipping lanes

Oil slicks skim atop the surface
of our drinking water—
an esophageal rainbow song
emanating throatward

WHY I MUST MEDITATE

Arisa White

I'm a slut for the same bitch voice
that knocks me down and uses
my head to mash fresh shit
and I smell traffic going eastbound
and a city with a rose swiff of itself—
its jeans, real low, hang off that stallion
round. She's alpha-on, hell a sure I've
nothing to respond, but ask, to disarm
with a bit of civility, *What you fittin to do?*
She's got spit for rain and her T-storm spansks
my profile, she booms, *Who's your daddy?*
I think I got dew to bend grass, she's got
volume right-to-the-end. My swell
can't wave a country down.

BOO BE GONE

You grab what is alive in me, my breast becoming.
With all the weather in your want, you say,
Today I'm a clear sky taking. Sunny and brazen, I let you.
Because this missing is mine. This hollow plot
where purple alpine are seeded, from taproots
come these bolts of silky phacelia.

Your teeth a picket fence, that first bite.
Honey, does this make you feel at home now?
In beams that betray my caves, these nerves flail for connection.
Honey, is there another number we can try?
You return for seconds, for the roof you lift off my heart.

Over each beat you play god,
and through my rugged mammary you chew.
Black widows knit to the lapping of your tongue.
Their needles bring out my stars, and a gauzy tit
that threatens to drop and splash your hands to innocence.

HE HAD THE NOSE OF A SUSPECT

She maneuvers her body with absence, figures how
to preposition her baggage, and there are tight
corners to keep her crying only. She is a storm—
a brew in her chest gone hunting and it wants
to bring back the king and make the king a carpet.
Mondays and days regardless of their prefixes,
he's in a pine—they grew to mahogany,
made babies so beautiful they spoiled the light.
Drained to her soles, she bats in leagues where sea
life is Vegas, and for the nose of him, this reiterative
Jim Crow perches on his limbs and caws him rotten.
It's beyond foul—his last breath, she holds and looks begging.

THE UPSTAIRS NEIGHBORS

Not any more do we hear the feet to translate a trespass into a dutchie. I remember they came downstairs about four years ago to apologize with a joint, because that past Sunday one of their guests was a toddler, who was a most chatty runner, and the adults with their heels. Then, he said, extending the grass: “We’re not planning on having kids.”

That is a lie I know so well: Freshman year, sitting in Bates, and her name was initials then. She said, “I don’t, and will never, date a white woman.” She ended up marrying two. I was my own example several years ago, dining with my girlfriend’s friend for the first time, I said: “I never get angry,” and punctuated it with a Manhattan.

Now we know his son by cries, from infant to now—savage, primal, and full of want and that insistence on survival. His cries go on without commercials. Now it is his feet, his loose grip on marbles, Tonka truck zoom-zooms, tumbles and falls on these hardwood floors, no carpet. At the crack of dawn, their bovine gaits above our bed, no carpet. They’ve become a family of undisciplined logs.

MY WIFE LEAVES ME FOR THE PORCH

She bought me crystals to pour into my bathwater.
She does what is in her economic bling, shows some
kind of roar, a sense of kingdom, confident *This is mine*
and wants a bouquet that can do the most splash.

She makes for a nice swim. The sun going down
your belly and a right amount of danger to keep you
in the blessed category—where you and the setting
have no beef. The day passes copacetic.

Today, those American Spirits send off signals.
She's in a chain of smokes. Someone has flipped
her virginal veil, called her white bitch, said
“Fuck you looking at?” She is as much trope

as the black woman who is quick to abandon her wit
and stand in stereo. I resist being pulled from my waters
to know this current, the reduction that occurs to make
such collisions possible. There are times I'm witness,

and need it known: “Look, she's got a Negra handler.
She's for our freedom.” My love is for them both.
I've filtered the tap, bring it for her throat,
for the pain of eating her words.

My heart breaks into fresh skin. I listen, aware
there's hurt and no rest, even at Whole Paycheck.
We admire the collection in her veil, how easily
it became a net with no intentions to release.

“I’M SHY”

and when you are shy, I see you dishonest.
I see you make a choice that betrays
the selves you are and I feel the riot.
There is rage and I leave you burning—
you’ve taken your hands from language,
stuck them in your pockets, you’re belly-up,
and I can’t show off the spine I’m reading.
Shy houses us in our own insecure houses,
and there between us, our fences—hard space
that divides and then we all turn politely.

DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK

I'm about to end it
just as my birthday comes to a head

Each bong hit makes me smoke—
this is my disappearance

I don't want to write about Africa,
we don't have a relationship anymore

But these exes
made a continent of my heart

I'm tired of my kindness,
there are no encores to give

Jobs are scams with lazy interviewers
who have their energy set on internal applicants

I'm about to end the poems in me—
we aren't a country anymore

Will shake off pricks and sycophants and friendless
friendships and our routine walks around the lake

The drought is less dry, and I have
braided my bastard hairs into a fishtail

I'm finding an ocean we haven't named,
haven't split into splits and there is no back wash

The poems are done—call this
an eulogy, the mic dropped to stage

SMELLS LIKE YOU SPENT TOO MUCH TIME IN THE MACHINE

It's tiring to be looked at as the darkest hour,
from the dark place in the eye,
from your pupil, we learn this presence
and the confrontation leaves you a voice in a cave.
In a spiral of questions that catalyze a short journey
around and around, a diameter nowhere near
my arm span, tale chasing in a scapegoated posture,
a perfumer would call fecal.

Come to me and find yourself a rest,
a clearer way to see—these waters, you're ready
for a washing. Peppermint soap sparkles
on your scalp, and let it constellate.
There are stars going through the rough
to shine for you. Looks like tomorrow will
bring no clouds and when the rainbow
is in front of you, the sun's got your back.

Stillness does you good,
and deep breaths open the tight chest.
Running has taken more than given,
and I will rub your feet for longer.
Feel your heart in your arches.
Lay that glacier in Antarctic down,
the bridge ain't called "Your Responsibility."
Verb your love on you, dream like a fish.
Make beliefs from carnelian and lapis lazuli.

Beneath your pillow place orange petals
that received your heat's kiss. Anticipate a path
to blood-moon honey—just a teaspoon
for calming your tea. If La Niña is against
your windows, indulge in the art of doing nothing—
appreciate no demand to show, to mask, to give,
and unhook your breasts to spill to gravity.
Get in your black and grow.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ARISA WHITE

Arisa White has never hesitated to explore the advantages one finds inherent in various genres: She's a poet and a playwright. A librettist and a writer of essays and other prose. Augury Books has just brought out her newest poetry collection *You're The Most Beautiful Thing That Happened*. Earlier collections *Hurrah's Nest*, *A Penny Saved, dear Gerald*, and the chapbooks *black pearl*, *Post Pardon*, and *Disposition for Shininess* receive praise and notice for their fearless approaches to the sharp edges of truths and their clear-eyed reports. White's a Cave Canem fellow, a Sarah Lawrence alumna, and a graduate of the University of Massachusetts Amherst's MFA for poets and writers. Living in Oakland, California, a native New Yorker, White is a faculty advisor for the BFA Creative Writing Program at Goddard College. She's been a visiting scholar at San Francisco State University's Poetry Center where she developed a special collection for Black Women Poets in The Poetry Center Archives. White will be in residence on the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus during the Juniper Summer Institute and Workshops in June 2017.

Over a few months during the spring and summer of 2016, *jubilat* and Arisa White exchanged the following interview via email.

DARA WIER: *What are some of your new plans? What's on the horizon?*

ARISA WHITE: I have plans of moving back to the East Coast to be closer to family. I miss being a part of their growing. And the Bay Area is getting too expensive. We want to own our home, have a garden, and a writing shed with a wood-burning stove. I want to slow this adjunct hustle, make more space for writing, to delve into prose, essays, because I'm intrigued by the voices that take authority in those longer forms.

With that said, I will be co-writing a children's book in verse about Biddy

Mason, who was born a slave in Georgia, petitioned for her freedom in California, and later became a wealthy landowner in Los Angeles. I need to write about twelve poems chronicling her life for 4th-grade readers. Heyday Books will publish it in 2018. It's been tricky deciding which narrative voice to use—first or third person? Especially for Mason's early life, how do you get into a voice that has no record? Writing from that void, I more viscerally realize the sadness of erasure, the fright of emptiness, the constant wondering if I belong here.

Now that I think of it, this year, so far has presented me with some nice opportunities to look back. In the spring, I was a visiting scholar at The Poetry Center and American Poetry Archives at San Francisco State University (SFSU) and I was in awe watching old videos of Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Ai, and Lucille Clifton, to name a few. These poets were my housemakers; their metric feet I walked in and out of, alongside, and then I learned to walk on my own. Seeing them alive in this way, their younger faces from four decades before, helped me to recall the ethos of a different era. This journeying through history, through poetry, gives my poems a back-presence, encouraging me to be now—to do what I need to do now with the poem. This fall SFSU will publish the essays I wrote about my experience in the archives and hopefully the special collection of black women poets will be digitized and made live by that time.

Lastly, *You're the Most Beautiful Thing That Happened* will be released in October from Augury Books. I enjoy saying the title of this book, which I got from the television show *How to Get Away With Murder*. The character played by Viola Davis, says, "You're the most beautiful thing that happened to me," to her former female lover. The original title for the manuscript was "This Ache and Its Silent Amplification," which worked on the page, but then when I said it aloud, people responded, "What?! Say that again." *You're the Most Beautiful Thing That Happened* is a nice complement to a collection of poetry and verse that re-envisions hate speech against gays and lesbians.

Is it possible for you to tell us a brief history of your engagement with writing—from as early as you wish to as recent as you'd like?

I used my body to write angels in the snow. It was so easy to bring them from heaven.

Familial voices, within and without, storytelling, playing spades, shooting the shit; snaps, “you’re mama,” hustles and dreams deferred; sermons, hollers, accents and twangs, Creole; and listening to grown-folks business and their ways with silence was a language of its own.

In junior high school I started a newspaper for my 8th grade class. I gave everyone an assignment to complete—the class clowns wrote jokes, the artists did cartoons, the gossipers wrote advice columns—and I wrote a mystery story where the most popular girl in class was the serial killer, narcissistically leaving a trail that spelled her last name. She loved it! I laid out the entire newspaper by hand and my mom took the originals to her job and Xeroxed a set of thirty for everyone in the class.

Throughout high school, I interned at New York Online and met a dear friend from the bulletin board service. One day, while at her home, I saw that she had a copy of one of my poems tacked to the wall near her computer.

In my undergrad interview at Sarah Lawrence College, I compared and contrasted Toni Morrison’s *Bluest Eye* and *Cures: A Gay Man’s Odyssey* by Martin Duberman. I was wearing black and white wingtip platforms, Crosby plaid flair wool pants, a fitted corduroy blazer—there are some outfits that help you find your style, help you liberate your voice.

In 2000, my first breakthrough poem “Happy Immaculate Birthday” was accepted for publication in *Kuumba* #4, which was edited by Reginald Harris, who I would later find out was a part of Cave Canem in 2003, when

I became a fellow. I still have the acceptance letter, dated January 14, 2000.

You've written within a few genres; can you say something about how the genres feel distinguished from one another?

Playwriting feels like I am writing in a cube—I am always keeping in mind the stage.

Fiction, there's a different relationship to the breath. There is more stillness required. When writing, it feels like I am accessing a deeper well in me, one that requires I learn to trust as different senses, muscles, intelligence come into play.

With personal essays, I'm often concerned with audience, because this voice seems to be in direct conversation with someone.

Poetry is my primary, my first language in many ways, so each genre has a poetic source. And in thinking this way, I've learned to resist the separation of genre and see myself more wholly when I approach the page.

Do you have a genre-preference at various times or for various subjects? Or is that not relevant?

Usually the subject will dictate the form it wants to take. Sometimes I have a subject in mind and it may pull from poetry, drama, and fiction, and so it becomes a matter of how best to render it all so that it is honestly realized. Right now, I'm working on what I call the "She" poems, which is theoretically rooted in the heroine journey and ecotherapy, and the main character takes a fantastical journey around a manmade lake, nestled in the heart of a city, to heal and actualize her feminine power. It is a work that I have a hard time describing in terms of genre because it is very hybrid, and it's the hybridity that is exciting and pushes my language and storytelling.

Do you do any particular kind of reading in preparation for writing?

There may be research involved, especially if I'm working on particular subject. For instance, when I was working on the *dear Gerald* poems, which dealt with absent fathers, and mine in particular, I read sociological studies, current articles on the issues, and poetry books written by women about their absent fathers. Also, I wanted to get a sense of the cultural context of my father's upbringing in Guyana in the 60s and 70s, so my research led me down avenues of slavery in the Caribbean, neo-colonialism, Jonestown, the police force as a paramilitary arm, and racialized political parties in the country-state.

How does reading figure into your writing practice?

I'm always reading—words, body language, silence, sounds, signs, vibes, behavior, patterns. There are times when I intentionally sit down and say, I will read this book, article, packet, poem, etc., and that intentionality creates a space to be entered. That quiet-calm of concentrated energy active in bringing something into form, into comprehension. That intentionality prepares me to enter my own writing. When I say prepare, it's like my body is already familiar with this generative sensation, so the reading is cartographic, allowing me to locate and access it more easily. So in those moments when I find myself feeling blah as I sit down to write, I'll read to be inspired, to be guided to that place that is ready to write, or to find suggestions for how to make a certain kind of something-else, something that may even feel new to me.

How much of what you're writing goes around with you----you have it on your mind, say----all the time even when you're not actually physically in the process of putting words in a document or on a page?

It hangs out with me until I'm done, especially the prose/essay pieces. Each encounter is a possible citing: a talk, poetry reading, television

drama series, and some rude remark from the homeless man. In having the writing go around with me, I'm figuring how can my ideas get worked out among the living, in the action of their bodies, so the essay/poem can be as much a living thought as it can be.

Of all the things you've noticed writers can't resist, what are a few you have resisted, and what are few you've chosen not to resist?

I've resisted gerunds, but I'm bringing their music back into my poetry. I've written just about every typical black and feminine and urban poem you can name: there's something about soul food, grandmother's hands, basketball, music and dancing, menstruation, rape, Africa as homeland, breasts, covert and overt racism, and The Man.

I've resisted the separation or naming of a poem as political. What if all my poems are political and so I don't need to stress myself out to write a political poem? Then I can choose how I will render the politics, if I will use the tropes or subvert them, be direct and list names, or be subtle and metaphorical. More (re)sources become available to create with, to play with, and therefore make discoveries that evolve and deepen my writing.

Ultimately, I'm striving to not be in a relationship of resistance, to be against something. I don't want that as the dominant force of my work. There are other relationships to cultivate. Defining yourself/your work in this manner means you remain in relationship to the thing you're resisting—it continues to make you. And there is something tight, stiff, and inert about that.

CARP

Catherine Wing

The fins end all atassel.
The muscle muscles

through the braid
bottlebrush of bone.

The bloodshot cord
of butterfly anchors

toggle-bolt and nestle
sprung down double helix.

Blunts the arrow
all at the eye

buried brass ring
and muffle of head.



BARN OWL

“Blinkingly peering from her front door to learn if it were too early to go hunting”



EAGLE OWL.
From a Drawing by G. E. Lodge.

[To face p. 40.



BARN OWL

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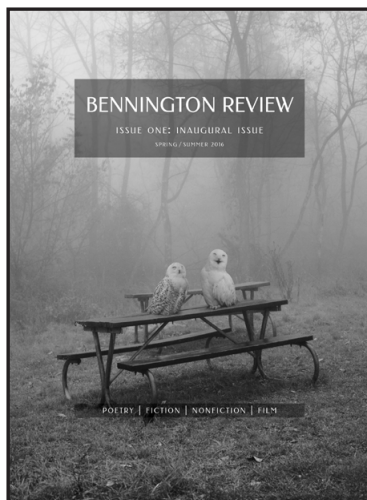
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